

Five Home Cleaners You Already Have in Your Kitchen

Our homes are our sanctuaries, our places of refuge, where we find solace and protection. Understandably then, we want to make sure that our homes are as comfortable and safe as we can possibly make them. Which is why we wipe, sweep, mop, scrub and vacuum up every little microbe or speck of dirt we see, visualize or imagine. This is where antibacterial cleaners and disinfectants, bleach, air fresheners, stain removers, and more, come in.

But did you know, that by using that heavy duty multi-surface cleaner, you're probably doing yourself and your family more harm than good? Studies have shown that most antibacterial home cleaners are made up of carcinogens, asthma instigators, and basically, poison. The products that claim to do damage to dirt are also doing damage to you. Less than seven percent of household products in the US market disclose all their contents, and research conducted by the US non-profit organization Environmental Working Group (EWG) has shown that over half the products in the market today contain lung-harming ingredients and carcinogens such as formaldehyde (which is, sadly, found in a whole lot of household items, including bedsheets), as well as chloroform. These items are not only harming humans, but also the environment.

Surprisingly, there are a lot of alternatives to these cleaners that are not only safe, but also widely available and probably already in your cupboards. Read on.

1. VINEGAR

An amazing natural all-purpose cleaner, disinfectant and deodorizer, when you dilute vinegar with equal parts water, it can clean almost any area in your house, such as your bathtub, sink, countertops, windows, stove tops, appliances, floors, and more. Use pure vinegar in your toilet bowl, drains and pipes, and spray it on moldy walls. Soak showerheads in it overnight to get rid of mineral deposits, and use it as a natural fabric softener by adding ½ cup to the rinse cycle in your washing machine in place of store bought softener.

Be aware that you should spot test vinegar, and even solutions, first, preferably on a hidden area, to make sure it doesn't damage any material. Avoid using it on marble or wood surfaces.

2. COFFEE GROUNDS

Coffee grounds can be used as a scrubbing agent because of its texture. Just add a few teaspoons of dry grounds to a rag or cloth and secure ends by tying or with rubber bands. Use this on hard-

to-clean dishes. Coffee grounds are also a great deodorizer. Sprinkle them in the bottom of your garbage bags, put a bowl in your refrigerator to absorb odor, or even soak smelly utensils in coffee grounds and water. You can also add coffee grounds to your potted plants to deter pests or insects that are attracted to them.

3. LEMON

Lemon juices are a natural bleaching agent, and are great at cleaning out stains and surfaces, and even your laundry. Add ½ cup of lemon juice to your rinse cycle in your washing machine to brighten your whites. Lemon peels can be inserted into garbage disposals or any area that needs some freshening. The juices are quite handy at dissolving soap scum and hard water deposits, and polishing brass and copper. You can also slice a lemon in half, sprinkle with baking soda and use it to wipe down countertops and surfaces. Make sure you spot test the lemon juice on your surface of choice first, and avoid using it on delicate stone, marble and stainless steel.

4. TABLE SALT

Because of its texture, table salt is the perfect scouring agent. You can use salt to remove soap scum from bathroom tiles by scrubbing them in a solution of one part salt, four parts vinegar. Sprinkle salt on glassware and rinse, to remove stains. Sprinkle it on greasy pots and pans, and countertops and tables, to absorb spills or loosen burnt crusts, before wiping them away or washing as usual. Aside from vinegar, salt can be combined with lemon juice or baking soda to scrub out just about anything.

5. BAKING SODA

Another versatile cleaner, baking soda can be used as a scrubbing agent, deodorizer, and to mop up spills and gunk. A box in the freezer or refrigerator absorbs odors, and you can even sprinkle it on smelly shoes, trash cans, laundry and upholstered furniture to deodorize. Sprinkle it generously over oil and grease spills, add water to form a paste, leave overnight and wash or wipe down the next day. Leave a mixture of one part baking soda and two parts water inside stained cups and mugs overnight, rub and rinse the next day. You can even erase kiddie crayon marks on white walls by applying a paste of equal parts baking soda and water, letting it dry and then wiping off with a clean cloth.

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